

VZCZCXRO3682  
PP RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNAG RUEHNH  
DE RUEHKO #0899/01 1100103  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 200103Z APR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2423  
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEAWJA/USDOJ WASHDC PRIORITY  
RULSDMK/USDOT WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J5//  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RHHMHBA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI  
RHMFIUU/HQ PACAF HICKAM AFB HI//CC/PA//  
RHMFIUU/USFJ //J5/JO21//  
RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA  
RUAYJAA/CTF 72  
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 5933  
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 3595  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 7396  
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 1275  
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 4132  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8881  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4903  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 4713

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 12 TOKYO 000899

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR E, P, EB, EAP/J, EAP/P, EAP/PD, PA;  
WHITE HOUSE/NSC/NEC; JUSTICE FOR STU CHEMTOB IN ANTI-TRUST DIVISION;  
TREASURY/OASIA/IMI/JAPAN; DEPT PASS USTR/PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;  
SECDEF FOR JCS-J-5/JAPAN,  
DASD/ISA/EAPR/JAPAN; DEPT PASS ELECTRONICALLY TO USDA  
FAS/ITP FOR SCHROETER; PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR;  
CINCPAC FLT/PA/ COMNAVFORJAPAN/PA.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 04/20/09

Index:

1) Harvard professor and former Pentagon official Joseph Nye picked as next ambassador to Japan, arriving this summer: Senior Japanese official [Mainichi]

Pakistan and Afghanistan assistance:

2) International conference hosted by Japan to assist Pakistan exceeds \$5 billion in pledges [Yomiuri]  
3) Special Envoy Holbrooke at news conference after Pakistan aid conference says U.S. seeking Japan to provide civilian aid to Afghanistan not SDF dispatch [Mainichi]  
4) In talks in Italy with U.S. and European counterparts, Agricultural Minister Ishiba announces that Japan will send more technicians to assist Afghanistan [Nikkei]

Anti-piracy effort:

5) MSDF destroyer has third encounter with pirate boat off Somalia [Mainichi]  
6) MSDF averaging only three vessels for anti-piracy duty, much less than originally planned [Mainichi]  
7) Ruling camp confident that anti-piracy bill will clear the Diet [Yomiuri]  
8) Ruling camp refuses opposition's call for revising the anti-piracy bill to add clause requiring MSDF to acquire Diet approval for dispatch [Sankei]

9) Concern rising about being able to implement the U.S. force realignment agreement due to opposition resistance to Guam pact, no progress on Futenma [Tokyo Shimbun]

North Korea problem:

10) Former President Carter was ready in March to visit Pyongyang for talks, but North Korea, readying its missile launch, refused the offer [Sankei]

11) Senior Japanese official says the U.S. will not engage in bilateral talks with North Korea for the time being [Tokyo Shimbun]

12) Former Finance Minister Shoichi Nakagawa wants Japan to consider arming itself with nuclear weapons to meet the nuclear threat from North Korea [Sankei]

13) Former Prime Minister Abe in Washington speech backs Obama disarmament plan [Sankei]

#### Political agenda:

14) Aso Cabinet support rate jumps 7.6 points to 25.2% in Jiji poll [Tokyo Shimbun]

15) Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) puts off holding an opinion survey to gauge public mood linked to the issue of party head Ozawa's resignation [Tokyo Shimbun]

16) DPJ wavering in its opposition to the supplementary budget now before the Diet [Nikkei]

#### Articles:

1) Nye selected as U.S. ambassador to Japan; Expected to arrive at post around the summer

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Abridged)  
April 18, 2009

TOKYO 00000899 002 OF 012

The appointment of Harvard University Professor Joseph Nye, a former assistant secretary of defense, to be the next U.S. ambassador to Japan has been firmed up. This was revealed on April 17 by a senior Japanese government official. Nye is known for his expertise on Japan, having tackled [while at the Pentagon] the strengthening of the Japan-U.S. alliance. His appointment can be said to demonstrate the Obama administration's stance of placing importance on relations with Japan. He is expected to arrive at his post around summer.

According to the senior government official, although Nye's name was floated prior to the inauguration of the Obama administration in January as the likely candidate for the ambassadorship to Japan, several candidates later were reportedly screened.

Nye served as assistant secretary of defense under the Clinton administration, and is known for promoting a redefinition of the alliance to strengthen the security arrangements between Japan and the United Nations in the post-Cold War period. In 2000 and again in 2007, he with former Deputy Secretary of State Armitage put together two comprehensive strategic papers on policy toward Japan known as the Armitage-Nye reports, which urged Japan to share the security role with the U.S.

2) 5 billion dollars in financial assistance to Pakistan pledged at international conference

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)  
April 18, 2009

The Pakistan Donors Conference hosted by the Japanese government and the World Bank was held at a Tokyo hotel on April 17. It was agreed at the meeting that participating nations will extend financial assistance totaling more than 5 billion dollars or roughly 500 billion yen over the next two years in order to help that nation, which is suffering from a continuing economic crisis, deal with poverty and improve health and education conditions.

The objective of the meeting was to sever the link between poverty and terrorism. The meeting brought together representatives of 31 countries, including Japan, the U.S., China and Iran, and 18 international agencies. Japan announced a plan to provide up to 1 billion dollars or roughly 100 billion yen, based on the premise that the program mapped out by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in November last year be implemented steadily. The U.S. also pledged

to extend the same amount.

The Japanese government at first aimed to raise 4 billion dollars or roughly 400 billion yen. However, with Middle Eastern and Asian countries taking interest in the situation in Pakistan, since it could affect the public security of its neighbor Afghanistan, those countries, too, announced their decisions to extend financial assistance. As a result, the pledges topped the original estimate. Many participating countries also asked the Pakistani government to make efforts to take measures to improve public safety mainly in the region bordering Afghanistan, and to correct social disparities.

Emerging from the meeting, Foreign Minister Nakasone, who serves as a co-chairman, told a news conference, "I hope that Pakistan will strengthen measures to root out international terrorism."

A friends meeting to confer on a mid-term strategy for the stabilization of politics in Pakistan was held prior to the donors

TOKYO 00000899 003 OF 012

conference. Participating countries vowed to help Pakistan reform its economy.

3) Special Envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan Holbrooke: U.S. not seeking SDF dispatch to Afghanistan, appeals for contribution from civilian sector

MAINICHI (Page 3) (Full)  
April 19, 2009

In a press conference in Tokyo at the Foreign Correspondents Club in Japan, U.S. Special Envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke stated: "There is no doubt that terrorists in Pakistan and Afghanistan are planning attacks on such major international cities as Tokyo." He also appealed for Japan to contribute to the stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan in areas that are its forte such as agriculture, health care, and civil-servant training.

Holbrooke compared the war in Afghanistan to the Bosnian dispute, in which he himself brokered a peace agreement. He said that in the case of Bosnia one could just phone the president and negotiate, but in Afghanistan, nobody knows who is in charge.

On the other hand, he admitted there were informal contacts at the Pakistan donors conference on April 17, saying that he had chatted one or two minutes with Iranian President Mottaki. In his speech on Afghan assistance, Mottaki highly praised the results, saying, "I was impressed by the extremely constructive contents."

4) Agriculture minister announces to U.S., EU plan to increase number of technicians dispatched to Afghanistan

NIKKEI (Page 3) (Full)  
April 20, 2009

Hiroshi Nomiyama, Cison di Valmarino, Italy

Agriculture Minister Shigeru Ishiba on April 19 separately met with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Marian Fischer Boel, a member of the European Commission responsible for agricultural affairs at the European Union. Ishiba during those meetings revealed Japan's plan to boost its assistance to Afghanistan in response to the U.S. policy of speeding up the reconstruction of the civilian sector in that nation, including an increase in the number of technical experts that Japan dispatches. It has been confirmed at the meetings that they will move ahead with talks for an early settlement of the multilateral trade talks at the World Trade Organization.

Ishiba during the meeting with Vilsack called on the U.S. to regulate animal feed promptly to ensure the safety of U.S. beef. The U.S. side made no requests to Japan to ease its import restrictions imposed on U.S. beef. In the talks with Fischer Boel, an agreement was reached that Japan and the EU will pursue talks in collaboration, while paying close attention to changes in the U.S. trade policy.

5) Third encounter for MSDF off Somalia

MAINICHI (Page 26) (Full)  
April 19, 2009

TOKYO 00000899 004 OF 012

A squadron of Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyers, currently on an antipiracy mission in waters off the eastern African coast of Somalia, caught an SOS call radioed by a foreign ship that was not under the MSDF's escort and was being tailed by suspicious boats, the Defense Ministry reported yesterday. When a destroyer-based helicopter flew to check the situation there, the suspicious boats stopped tailing the foreign ship, according to the Defense Ministry. This is the third time for the MSDF squadron to encounter suspicious boats since it started operations there on March 30.

According to the Defense Ministry, a foreign cruiser asked nearby ships over the radio for help on April 18 at around 8:04 p.m. (2:04 p.m., local time) when it was being tailed by two small boats and was out at sea about 37 kilometers northeast of a gathering point in the western part of the Gulf of Aden for Japanese ships and Japan-linked ships where the MSDF destroyers were on standby.

A helicopter based on the Sazanami, one of the two MSDF destroyers, took off and closed in on the suspicious boats, and the suspicious boats halted their operation. The helicopter left the scene in about 30 minutes, judging that the suspicious boats gave up chasing the cruiser.

The helicopter spotted a total of three suspicious boats but could not see if they were armed. They were flying a flag looking like Yemen's national flag but might have been pirate ships in disguise.

On April 11, the MSDF destroyers were asked for help by a foreign ship almost in the same area.

6) MSDF escorts 3 ships on average

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Top play) (Abridged)  
April 19, 2009

The Sazanami and the Samidare, Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyers on an antipiracy mission in waters off the coast of Somalia, escort three Japanese ships a day on average and most recently escorted only one ship. This is primarily because there has been a sharp decrease in the number of ships due to the global recession and the MSDF destroyers and commercial ships have different schedules.

On March 30, the MSDF started its escort activities in Somalia waters, where the two MSDF destroyers convoy Japanese commercial and Japan-linked ships, making a shuttle almost every four days in the Gulf of Aden off Somalia. The MSDF has so far made three shuttles and a half. The two MSDF destroyers, in their first shuttle, escorted five ships on their way from the gathering point and two ships on their way back. In their second shuttle, they escorted three ships on their way outward and four ships on their way back, and in their third shuttle, three ships on their way outward and three ships on their way back. In the fourth shuttle, only one ship on their way outward.

The government had explained that Japanese ships and Japan-linked ships passing through the Gulf of Aden would total 2,000 a year or 5 a day on average. If that is the case, the MSDF would have escorted 20 ships in a four-day shuttle and would have escorted 10 ships on its way outward and another 10 on its way back.

However, the actual number has failed to reach a half. According to

TOKYO 00000899 005 OF 012

the Japanese Shipowners' Association, a total of about 1,500 ships, broken down into container ships and automobile carriers, passed

through the Gulf of Aden last year. However, there has been a sharp decrease in that number, as seen from a decrease of 50% in the number of automobile carriers.

#### 7) Ruling parties confident about enactment of anti-piracy bill

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Excerpts)  
April 19, 2009

The ruling and opposition camps will start talks at the beginning of next week to review the government-sponsored anti-piracy bill. Stormy negotiations are expected, but the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) plans to avoid delaying deliberations. Ruling party members now expect that the bill will be undoubtedly enacted in the current Diet session.

The DPJ and the People's New Party (PNP) have called for six items in the government bill to be revised. The Japanese Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party have decided not to participate in the revision talks. The DPJ and the PNP focus on a provision for the government's authorization to mobilize Self-Defense Force (SDF) troops to cope with a situation that demands higher capability than what the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) can offer.

They cite the procedures in the government as stipulated in the bill as one problem. Under the bill, the defense minister would issue an order upon gaining approval from the prime minister. Under the opposition side's draft amendment, the land, infrastructure, transport and tourism minister would make a request to the prime minister, and the anti-piracy taskforce, headed by the prime minister, would dispatch SDF troops. SDF troops on an anti-piracy mission would be also given the status of taskforce members. The draft amendment specifies anti-piracy operations as chiefly the JCG's duty and aims to weaken the image of SDF dispatch by giving SDF troops anti-piracy taskforce membership.

Another problem is the Diet's involvement. The amendment requires prior Diet approval, placing emphasis on civilian control.

The ruling coalition is negative about these proposals on the grounds that they touch on the fundamentals of the bill. On the idea of regarding SDF troops also as members of the anti-piracy taskforce, a senior Defense Ministry official pointed out: "It would become ambiguous which would be responsible, the anti-piracy taskforce or the SDF." Some voice concern about a lack of consistency with other laws if the bill requires prior Diet approval.

Reflecting such concerns, the government bill is likely to be revised on a small scale. In the ruling camp, some insist that even if the bill is revised, the DPJ is expected to vote against it because the main opposition party does not want to undermine a joint struggle framework among the opposition parties. The government bill should not be amended at all." But a senior Liberal Democratic Party member said: "The DPJ must be hoping for smooth enactment of the bill so that its stance of opposing it will not be spotlighted.

#### 8) Revising antipiracy legislation; Ruling parties reject idea of prior Diet approval, saying such will make the system unstable

TOKYO 00000899 006 OF 012

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)  
April 20, 2009

The ruling and opposition parties are scheduled to begin on April 21 revision talks on the government-sponsored antipiracy legislation enabling the country to dispatch Self-Defense Forces (SDF) vessels on antipiracy missions in waters off Somalia and other areas as necessary. Appearing on an NHK discussion program yesterday ahead of the revision talks, ruling party members, including former Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Vice-President and Foreign Affairs Research Commission Chairman Taku Yamasaki, announced that the ruling bloc would not respond to the Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) call to make it mandatory for the government to obtain prior Diet approval for dispatching SDF vessels for such purposes.

In the program, Yamasaki said: "We are willing to make revisions in a reasonable scope, but prior Diet approval is not possible." New Komeito Policy Research Council Chairman Natsuo Yamaguchi, too, expressed reluctance, saying: "Under the divided Diet, prior Diet approval would make the system extremely unstable."

Meanwhile, the DPJ shadow cabinet's foreign minister Yoshio Hachiro emphatically said: "Prior Diet approval is necessary. We will conduct revision talks in collaboration with other opposition parties."

Hachiro added: "In principle, dealing with piracy is the Japan Coast Guard's (duty). It is important to swiftly improve the Maritime Self-Defense Force's setup."

Yamasaki objected to Hachiro's view, saying: "If the JCG were to do everything on its own, it would have to build large vessels like MSDF destroyers, and that would be a waste of time and tax money."

Social Democratic Party (SDP) Policy Deliberation Council Chair Tomoko Abe expressed reluctance about taking part in the planned vision talks, saying: "Frankly speaking, there is a huge gap with the ruling parties. [The ruling bloc] is saying, 'We cannot make compromises on this and that.'"

Japanese Communist Party foreign affairs department head Akira Kasai opposed the very idea of dispatching the MSDF. People's New Party Policy Deliberation Council Vice Chairman Mikio Shimoji noted: "An agreement will not be reached unless dynamic revisions are made."

9) Government concerned about U.S. force realignment, given DPJ's opposition to Guam International Agreement and no progress on Futenma relocation

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)  
April 19, 2009

Takuji Soka

It has now become certain that the Japan-U.S. agreement to relocate U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam will clear the Diet by mid-May. The major opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) is opposed to the pact, however. Given the situation, in the event the DPJ takes power through the next House of Representatives election, the pact might be left up in the air. Further, there are no prospects for the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan to the coastal area of Camp Schwab in Nago. The environment

TOKYO 00000899 007 OF 012

surrounding the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan remains severe.

Based on the U.S. force-realignment roadmap, the foreign minister of Japan and the U.S. secretary of State signed the agreement in February. The pact would relocate some 8,000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam. In the ongoing Diet session, the government sought understanding for the agreement, saying it would help reduce the burden on Okinawa, home to 75% of U.S. bases in Japan.

In an April 14 Lower House plenary session, four opposition parties, including the DPJ, objected to the agreement, saying the grounds for Japan's contribution (2.8 billion dollars) to the relocation plan were unclear. Despite that, the accord was able to pass the Lower House with a majority of votes by the ruling parties. Even if the accord is rejected in the opposition-controlled Upper House, it is now certain to clear the Diet within 30 days due to the constitutional superiority of the Lower House.

Nevertheless, the fact that the DPJ opposed the agreement carries great significance.

In his meeting on April 14 with former U.S. Ambassador to Japan Walter Mondale, DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa expressed his intention for Japan to have an increased say in the alliance with the United States. "(Japan) has not said what it has to say (to the United

States)," Ozawa noted. Should the DPJ take power, the pact could turn into just a paper agreement.

The agreement specifies "tangible progress toward completion of the Futenma replacement facility." But the two countries have been experiencing difficulties in realizing this.

The Okinawa side has repeatedly asked to move the planned runways further offshore than Camp Schwab. Although Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura said in response, "We take the local view seriously," the government still thinks the current plan is the best.

In the past, an earlier plan to relocate the Futenma functions to waters off the Henoko district in Nago fell through due to stiff local opposition. A Foreign Ministry official said anxiously, "We cannot let the United States down twice."

10) U.S. sounds out North Korea on visit by Carter in March, showing eagerness for bilateral talks

SNKEI (Page 3) (Excerpts)  
April 19, 2009

The U.S. government secretly planned to send former Democratic President Jimmy Carter to North Korea in March in an effort to convince Pyongyang to drop its missile-launch plan, a diplomatic source connected to Japan-U.S. relations stated yesterday. But Pyongyang declined Washington's unofficial proposal, citing leader Kim Jong Il's health problem and other reasons. The plan for Carter's visit represents, in a sense, Washington's eagerness to have bilateral talks with Pyongyang. Once the two governments begin talks, Japan might be pressed to go along with any agreement reached there.

According to informed sources, the U.S. worked on North Korea in March in various ways to realize bilateral talks, suggesting such

TOKYO 00000899 008 OF 012

plans as a dispatch of Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth to the nation. But North Korea rejected the U.S. proposal, on the grounds that it would be unacceptable unless the U.S sent someone at a higher level than Bosworth.

Former President Carter visited Pyongyang on June 15, 1994, to deal with the first North Korean nuclear crisis. At the time, Pyongyang announced its intention to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and indicated the possibility of developing nuclear weapons, heightening tensions on the Korean Peninsula. Carter met with President Kim Il Sung and succeeded in eliciting his agreement to freeze the nation's nuclear program.

Keeping this experience in mind, the U.S. government anticipated that Carter would be able to dissuade the North from implementing the missile-launch plan. The government reportedly unofficially sounded North Korea out about a visit by Carter, in the hope of arranging about a meeting with Kim Jong Il.

North Korea, however, rejected the proposed Carter visit and ignored the U.S. call for self-restraint on the launch plan. It fired a missile on April 5.

Pyongyang's refusal of the U.S. proposal shows its stance of recklessly pushing ahead with missile development. There is even a rumor that the North Korean side explained, in rejecting the U.S. proposal, that Kim Il Sung died on July 8, just after Carter visited North Korea, so if Kim Jong Il, now in poor health, meets with Carter, it "might bring him bad luck."

11) U.S. will not hold bilateral talks with North Korea for time being, according to senior Japanese government official

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)  
April 20, 2009

This newspaper learned on April 19 that the U.S. government, in the wake of North Korea's boycott of Six-Party Talks, has decided not to

hold bilateral talks with that nation for the time being. Washington has apparently responded to Tokyo's call that priority should be given to maintaining the Six-Party Talks framework. This was revealed by a senior Japanese official.

Some Japanese officials have been increasingly worried that once U.S.-North Korea talks begin in earnest, the abduction issue could be left behind. This official takes it that such a risk has disappeared. However, many still take the view that direct talks between the two countries would be the only way to find a breakthrough in the situation. There is a possibility of the U.S. reneging on its commitment if no prospects for resuming the Six-Party Talks are obtained.

According to the same source, Secretary of State Clinton on April 14 revealed the U.S. government's stance of eyeing talks with North Korea as a means to find a breakthrough on the North Korea problem. Following this statement, Japan discussed future measures with the U.S. side through several channels, including the Japanese Embassy in the U.S. The same source also said that Japan has a commitment from several senior U.S. officials not to enter into direct talks with the North for the time being.

12) LDP lawmaker Nakagawa calls for "nuclear weapons to counter

TOKYO 00000899 009 OF 012

nuclear weapons"

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)  
April 20, 2009

In reaction to the UN Security Council's adoption of a presidential statement condemning North Korea's [April 5] missile launch, Pyongyang has declared that it would resume its nuclear development program. Touching on this fact, former Finance Minister Shoichi Nakagawa in a meeting yesterday in Obihiro, Hokkaido, expressed his view that Japan should debate possessing nuclear weapons, saying: "Speaking purely militarily, it is common sense in the world that nuclear weapons are the only means that can counter nuclear weapons."

In October 2006, when he was serving as Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Policy Research Council chairman during the Abe administration, Nakagawa also said: "Going nuclear is not prohibited under the Constitution." Nakagawa emphasized the view that North Korea possesses a large number of Nodong mid-range missiles and that it has nuclear bombs small enough to be loaded on missiles. He said: "They have moved closer to the stage where they can conduct launches at any time without advance notice. We must always discuss countermeasures."

13) Former Prime Minister Abe calls for nuclear disarmament including China

SANKEI (Page 3) (Full)  
April 19, 2009

Takashi Arimoto, Washington

Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe delivered a speech in Washington on the afternoon of April 17, local time, in which he referred to the nuclear disarmament policy recently announced by U.S. President Barack Obama and said: "The policy should include not only the U.S. and Russia but also China."

Abe expressed his wariness about China's arms buildup, saying: "We need to keep close tabs on what it is aiming at. Securing transparency is important."

Abe also pointed out the need for Japan to cooperate with China in tackling such issues as global warming. He remarked: "I have long taken a severe view about China. Those who are called pro-Chinese had said that 'if Abe became prime minister, Japan-China relations would collapse,' I visited China as the first destination of my overseas trip after assuming the premiership and paved the way for the two countries to establish a mutually beneficial bilateral



relationship based on common strategic interests. Regarding North Korea's past abductions of Japanese nationals, he said: "Some reportedly criticize our nation's stance as uncompromising, but the blame falls on North Korea, which abducted them, so North Korea should take action first." He emphasized the need for a settlement of the abduction issue, in line with the nuclear and missile issues.

14) Poll: Cabinet support rises to 25.2%

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 18, 2009

TOKYO 00000899 010 OF 012

According to a Jiji Press poll conducted April 10-13, the approval rating for Prime Minister Taro Aso rose 7.6 points from last month to 25.2%, topping 20% for the first time since last December. The disapproval rating was 53.8%, a decrease of 13.6 points over last month. In the poll, respondents were asked who they thought was appropriate for prime minister. In this popularity ranking for premiership, Aso tallied 26.7%, with Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) President Ichiro Ozawa at 20.6%.

Support for the Aso cabinet's support had been on the decline in previous polls, but no further decrease was seen in the latest poll. This is presumably because the government has now begun to implement economic stimulus measures, such as handing out cash benefits to all households and lowering expressway tolls. Meanwhile, the DPJ has been unstable due to illicit political donations from Nishimatsu Construction Co. to Ozawa's fund-managing body.

The poll was conducted across the nation on a face-to-face basis, with a total of 2,000 male and female participants aged 20 and over. The response rate was 65.9%.

Among those who support the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, the Aso cabinet's support rate was 58.9%, up 11.6 points, and its nonsupport rate at 27.7%, down 14.2 points. Among those with no particular party affiliation, the support rate rose 7.3 points to 16.5%, with the nonsupport rate decreasing 15.5 points to 56.3%. Among DPJ supporters, the support rate was 6.5% and the nonsupport rate was 87.5%.

In the popularity ranking for premiership, Aso rose 4.3 points from last month, with Ozawa down 6.6 points. Ozawa was constantly above Aso in last December's poll and in the following polls. This time, however, Aso outstripped Ozawa.

15) DPJ puts off planned survey to explore voter preference

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)  
April 20, 2009

A conclusion on the issue of whether Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Ichiro Ozawa will remain in his party post or resign will likely be postponed to sometime after the Golden Week holidays in early May. The reason is because the DPJ has put off its survey on voters slated for mid-April to explore their preferences. It is viewed that the results of the survey would become means for Ozawa to make a decision on the matter. Some DPJ members are calling for disclosing the outcome of the poll. Regardless of when the survey is carried out, it will likely become a cause of rekindling the Ozawa issue in the DPJ.

The DPJ conducts regular surveys in single-seat constituencies for the House of Representatives. At a press conference in last March, Ozawa revealed the intention to conduct a survey in April, the last one having been carried out in late January. He told his aides that the survey would be held on April 18-19.

Former DPJ President Seiji Maehara, however, stated: "It is important to debate the outcome of the poll, showing where the party should go." Akira Nagatsuma, a deputy chairman of the Policy Research Committee, softly sought for information disclosure in an executive board meeting, questioning: "How much of the results of

the survey be disclosed?"

Those remarks stem from that fact that Ozawa has kept secrecy in disclosing survey results even to the executive board. Many in the DPJ doubt that Ozawa would disclose the outcome of the survey in order to continue serving as party leader.

Ozawa has rejected disclosure, saying "We have notified individual (candidates and lawmakers) of the necessary information. The information should not be disclosed." It is considered that the postponement of the survey is to prevent creating discord in the party.

Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama, who is in a position to support Ozawa, put up a smoke screen, saying: "There is no political party that discloses the timing and results of a survey. A survey might have been conducted or it might be held next week."

A mid-level lawmaker said: "April 24 or 26." If this is the case, the outcome of a survey in each electoral district would be conveyed to individual lawmakers and candidates sometime after the consecutive holidays in May.

Ozawa has kept his grip on the party by holding the power to select candidates by obtaining the exclusive possession of the results of surveys. It is ironic that all eyes are now being focused on whether the outcome of the poll will become the criteria for Ozawa to make a decision on his course of action.

16) DPJ unable to come up with response to second budget

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
April 20, 2009

The main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) has yet to reach a consensus on how to respond to a supplementary budget for fiscal 2009 and related bills, which the government will submit to the Diet on April 27. In the wake of the scandal involving DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa's state-funded secretary over illegal donations from Nishimatsu Construction Co., the driving force for the largest opposition party is now weakening. Given that situation, the DPJ has yet to decide on when to take a vote in the opposition controlled House of Councillors, although it has advocated carrying out thorough deliberations, aiming to turn around the situation. Some DPJ members are concerned that the ruling coalition, which is now beginning to take a bearish posture, might control the pace of deliberations.

DPJ Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Kenji Yamaoka stressed in a meeting on April 17 of the party's House of Representatives members: "We consider deliberations on the extra budget as a battle field." Prior to this, Yamaoka discussed with Ozawa about the handling of the extra budget and related bills at Ozawa's office. Ozawa, Yamaoka, Deputy President Naoto Kan, Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama, and DPJ Upper House Caucus Chairman Azuma Koshiishi will also confer on the matter tomorrow.

Behind the gaps in views of the DPJ members is Prime Minister Taro Aso's remark that he may dissolve the Lower House, depending on the DPJ's response.

With an eye on a possibility that Aso will dissolve the Lower House

if deliberations are dragged on, Koshiishi pointed: "In order to have the prime minister dissolve the lower chamber as early as possible, we could take (the extra budget and related bills) hostage." Hatoyama and Yamaoka, however, have emphasized that the party will not put off the deliberations unnecessarily. The two have predicted that the ruling camp would have a hard time because there will be no issues if the DPJ accepts an early voting.

Kan referred to the DPJ's plan to submit a bill revising the government-drafted extra budget in order to make clear pints at issue in the budget. Policy Research Committee Chairman Masayuki Naoshima, however, took a negative view toward Kan.

DPJ executives seem unable to come up with a strategy for the rest of the Diet session, even though they are waiting for the ruling coalition's moves by sending hard- and soft-line messages. Although Ozawa has said he will make efforts to take the initiative in Diet measures, many junior and mid-level lawmakers in the party want him to quickly determine whether he will continue in his party post or quit, rather than to focus on Diet measures.

With the exception of the budget and related bills, the DPJ leadership intends to accept an early passage of such key bills as the antipiracy bill. However, some in the DPJ remain unhappy with the leadership's policy. The DPJ put off a vote on April 16 on a bill amending the Financial Instrument and Exchange Law, on which the Lower House Financial Affairs Committee is now deliberating, since the DPJ Upper House caucus insisted that it should become a tool to delay the start of deliberations on the supplementary budget.

ZUMWALT